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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on data from a larger study of women being mentored into educational leadership positions in public schools, focusing on women's conflicts with leadership and how mentoring can help in dealing with such conflicts. The larger sample included 55 mentors and proteges in Washington, Maryland, and Virginia. This paper uses the Washington state sample, which includes interviews with 10 proteges and 6 mentors (14 women and 2 men). Participants were white, Hispanic, and African American. Researchers used qualitative analysis and a feminist, poststructuralist framework to critique the mentoring of women within the cultures of K-12 public school administration in which they worked. The study examined mentorship from the perspective of women in professional relationships with mentors in the field of education. Findings indicated that participants were unique women struggling with conflicts between the public role of leadership and the desire to preserve their personal priorities and values. Mentors were important in showing how women could successfully combine professional and personal lives. Results indicated that women had perceptions of themselves as different from traditional administrators, and they wanted to make a difference. They felt a lack of public support and public credibility. Women of color faced racist attitudes and practices in working within a conservative, predominantly male, white culture of educational administration. (Contains 23 references.) (SM)

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Women's Conflicts as they are Mentored into Educational Leadership in Public Schools

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada, April 19-23, 1999. This paper will appear in revised form as Chapter 5 of Coloring outside the lines, Mentoring women into school leadership (SUNY Press, in preparation). For more on the mentoring of women, with data from the states of Washington, Virginia and Maryland, reference should be made to the complete study.

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Introduction

Recent research suggests that the different perspectives of women, white and of color, in leadership may help bring about new forms of leadership, and necessary knowledges, understandings and skills needed for teaching diverse school populations (Blount 1998; Edson 1988; Grogan 1996; Henry 1996; Pence 1995; Restine 1993). Yet for many women, moving into educational leadership is not without its conflicts and challenges. This paper examines some of the conflicts and issues experienced by women as they are being mentored into educational leadership positions in the public schools. Mentoring is defined as "the process of developing people in organizations" (Grady, Krumm & Peery 1998, p. 90). Conflict refers to the oppositional feelings, impulses, desires and tendencies of women who are experiencing a transition or movement from one professional position to another, e.g., Assistant Principal being mentored for the Principalship or Assistant Superintendent being mentored for the Superintendency.

When women today hold administrative positions, such as superintendent, the most prestigious and powerful position in the public schools, or school principal, we wondered what are their experiences of mentoring. The literature on mentoring makes the point that for women, mentoring is rare, and that when they do receive mentoring, for women too often their experience is "debilitating rather than empowering" (Johnsrud 1991, 7). We wanted to know much more about the experiences of women being mentored into educational leadership in public school systems. Mentoring has traditionally been a part of this androcentric culture of educational administration. We show some of the conflicts for women concerning mentoring and leadership, the unwritten rules that those aspiring to administrative positions in the public school systems often do not know, and how mentoring can be critical in shaping the educational leadership of women.

Feminist research

This paper is part of a larger study of women, white and of color, who are being mentored into educational leadership positions in K-12 public school systems, with data from the three states of Washington, Virginia and Maryland. The paper reports on the Washington data only, focusing on women's conflicts with leadership, and how mentoring can be helpful in dealing with these conflicts. The larger study is a qualitative study of fifty five purposively selected mentors and protégés. Mentor-protégé relationships in three states, Washington, Maryland and Virginia, were studied. Participants were selected according to the following criteria: (a) a working relationship of at least one year; (b) a naturally occurring or informal mentoring relationship, not one organized by a school district or university; (c) the protégé identified the mentor as someone whose help has been instrumental in her own career; and (d) protégés were women aspiring to and being mentored into educational leadership positions in the public schools.

The Washington state sample includes interviews with sixteen participants (ten proteges and six mentors), of which there were fourteen women and two men. One of the men was white and the other Hispanic. The latter served as mentor to two of the women. Of the women, nine were white, four were Hispanic, and one was African-American. To ensure the confidentiality of our interviewees, all proper names used for individuals, schools, schools districts and cities in this study are pseudonyms.

We use qualitative analysis and a feminist poststructuralist framework (Capper 1993; Davies 1994; Weedon 1997) to critique the mentoring of women within the cultures of K-12 public school administration in which they work. The study examines mentorship from the perspective of women in professional relationships with a mentor in the field of education. We consider both the benefits, as well as the problems for mentors and protégés. We also take into account that schools are located in a broader context of a gendered and racist society. Following Chase (1995) we offer women's accounts of power and subjection/oppression in their professional lives as educational administrators,

but we focus specifically on mentoring for educational leadership. We show that women are not reproducing the patriarchy. Instead, we show women leaders who are on one level, 'same' with their male colleagues, conforming to the expectations and essentially presenting no problems, and simultaneously they are 'other' (different/marginalized) and engaging in subversive and overt practices to change the system (Stalker 1994).

Mentoring can be critical in empowering women to negotiate their way through conflicts embedded in the traditional role of educational leader. As leaders, women are at once both powerful and oppressed in their professional lives (Chase 1995). The finding of conflicts reported in this paper is only one of many findings on mentoring from the Washington data. We felt it was important to show the conflicts that some women experience, for this draws attention to the ways that mentoring can assist women in overcoming these difficulties. Mentors need to know and understand what women's lives are like, and their hopes, dreams and aspirations. Mentors can help women in resisting dominant forces and seeking change, so that conflicts are a site for new ways of leadership. The encouraging aspect of women having conflicts with traditional educational leadership and often being/feeling marginalized, is that marginality is a place for creativity and new directions.

It should be noted that in referring to women in this study, this is not to imply that all the women felt the same way, or that the views in this paper represent all women. For instance, not every woman in school leadership is a parent, but all of the women in the Washington sample except one have children, and personal/family considerations was a dominant theme. The voices included here are purposively selected as the most cogent examples of experiences that were repeated most often by participants. The reader can decide those that signify meaning for her. In addition, in examining mentor and protégé relationships, people identified as either a mentor or protégé in the narrative are also simultaneously engaging in the other role with others. However, the identification in the

text as mentor or protégé refers to the pair relationship that was the focus of this study. (See Table 2, below, for a description of the mentoring pairs).

TABLE 2 - Washington State Participants in the Study

Mentor	Protégé
*Dr. Jeff Stewart (white male) Assistant Superintendent	*Dr. Susan Rembert (white female) Assistant Principal
*Dr. Pat Sorensen (white female) Principal Elementary School	* Eileen Hales (white female) Central Office
*Dr. Les Johnson (Hispanic male) Superintendent	*Dr. Meredith Koval (white female) Assistant Superintendent
*Dr. Les Johnson (Hispanic male) Superintendent	* Diane Lynch (white female) Principal Elementary School
* Marcia Francis (white female) Principal Elementary School	* Reneé Miles (Hispanic female) Assistant Principal
* Gabriela Ramirez (Hispanic female) Community college professor	Leticia Martinez (Hispanic female) Assistant Principal
*Joyce Stearns (white female) President of Education Association	Lesley Kinnard (white female) Union leader/teacher
Othene Kirkland (African-American female) Retired principal	* Doreen Ballard (African-American female) Principal elementary school
Dr. Barbara Hansen (white female) Currently law school student	* Maria Valdez (Hispanic female) Director, Special Programs, Elementary
Dr. Carlos Domingos (Hispanic male) Dean of Community College	* Ramona Gonzales (Hispanic female) Director of Special Programs, Secondary
Dr. Sherrill Williams (white female) Assistant Superintendent	* Peggy Hoffman (white female) Central office
Dr. Barbara Hansen (white female) Currently law school student	* Emilia Head (white female) Assistant Director, Special Prog., Elemen.

Findings

Whole person interests and energies and professional norms

"Life's too short and I'm happy here" says Protégé, Diane Lynch (Principal), to explain her different priorities, what might be seen by others as lowered aspirations, for

she could apply for a superintendency but she is not going to "just yet". She struggles with the perceived costs to family competing with a desire to succeed and achieve in public leadership positions. For some women, their aspirations for leadership positions seem to be tempered by a realistic assessment of what this is going to mean for them personally, and the costs involved. They ask, "Can I do this job and still be me, and hold onto the values that I have, such as a happy and fulfilling personal/family life?" Both private and public spheres have strong demands, what Acker (1983, p. 191) refers to as "two greedy institutions."

Women in this sample talked at length about their desires and responsibilities for their personal lives, and the tension with contemporary work expectations and professional norms (also see Scherr 1995, pp. 317-318). Partners and families provide tremendous support for these women leaders, enabling them to pursue high profile and demanding careers. Nevertheless, the women say they face additional difficulties because they are women who take on responsibility for much of the emotional and practical needs of children and family.

> The negative aspects of administration are the hours that you have to put in and how you balance the demands of such a challenging position with your family responsibilities and your personal life. I work ten to eleven hours a day with no lunch breaks and no coffee breaks from 7:30 am to 6:30 pm every day. I don't take work home on the weekends. That's time that I've made a commitment to myself to keep for my family. You're everywhere all the time. I deliver things by hand. I'm up and down the halls. The hours are the biggest commitment, and how would you be able to do all that if your children were small? My youngest is now in high school, and I have a very supportive husband. (Mentor, Pat Sorenson)

> Everybody's pushing me in that direction [to be principal and later superintendent], but see my kids are young and there's a bigger time commitment as a principal than there is a vice-principal, a much bigger time commitment. (Protégé, Reneé Miles)

Note the additional concerns of these woman leaders that career success may lead to changes and stresses in personal relationships:

> I think it would be interesting sometime to take a survey of the superintendents in the state and see how many have been married more than once, and how many have had some really tough relationships as principals. I'm one of two women principals in our entire district [13 principals in Roberts School District] that hasn't had at least one divorce. It [the principalship] just really eats up time, and the emotional costs too, so I won't move into the superintendency until my daughters are old enough. I'm finding that they need me more now than they did when they were two and three years old in some ways. (Protégé, Diane Lynch)

> When I reflect back I did not have the support for my education and career from home ... it caused a real gap in my marriage. And I did get divorced and I know it was because I was obtaining more education and moving up. I was not at home. I was maybe spending money frivolously in his opinion. (Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez)

A related conflict is that when women do choose to put family considerations first, they feel as though they are then looked upon as being unable to accept the challenge, that they simply can't do the job of leadership, and that family is an excuse to avoid taking on additional professional responsibilities. Thus, Principal Diane Lynch is concerned about time and timing. She knows that the expectations in her profession are that she will apply

for and get the superintendency when she completes the superintendent credential, since she has been an effective principal for many years in a number of large schools. She is in her late forties, and the time is right for her to pursue this position. However, she is more concerned with time in terms of the potential loss of time for family life. For some women, while mentoring is welcome, the pressure that this can create for them to take higher level positions can create a conflict in themselves. They want the promotion and opportunities, but are afraid of the time commitment and the potential diminishing of the quality of one's personal life.

> I'm taking a real risk in doing that [deliberately delaying taking a superintendency] because in June I'll have the superintendent's certificate and the sage advice is 'You'd better go after a superintendency because you're gonna have to explain why did you sit for so many years?' And my response is, 'I want to be ready to do the job correctly.' I feel I need more experience at central administration. But the paramount thing is my first priority is my family, my second is to finish my doctorate. I know too many superintendents out there that have done all the class work for the doctorate but have never completed that final piece. My family has sacrificed a lot for me to go through this program and I'm not going to put that in jeopardy to go into a superintendency. (Protégé, Diane Lynch)

Some Hispanic women talked about the conflict they experience between traditional roles and expectations, and women's professional roles and possibilities:

> Conflict sometimes comes from spouses, and conflict can arise with parents. Conflict over different expectations for their wife or daughter. You know when you're looking at certain classifications or certain ethnic groups, education may not be the priority. So again it comes down to an awareness or sensitivity of that

person's situation. Having empathy [is critical for mentors]. (Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez)

Mentors need to be sensitive to and aware of the struggles that individual women may be facing. Women agreed that personal support is essential if women are to be successful in leadership, and this needs to come from both the mentor(s) and from those who form the circle of significant others.

Some women in this sample also see themselves as marginal to traditional "educational administration." Women may be used to being the marginal outsider, and may not feel comfortable or competent in the power and authority vested as an insider in an administrative role. They describe sometimes feeling ostracized by family members or friends who don't support or understand their leadership role, and alienated from teacher colleagues when they take on leadership roles. Family may also need to be educated about ways they can stay connected with their woman leader (partner, sibling, daughter), to be more supportive and help boost confidence. For instance, in the case of Maria Valdez, an Hispanic woman Director of Special Programs in a large school district, her husband's willingness to take on family responsibilities was critical in enabling her to spend the time that she needed to succeed in her career. Note, however, that she still refers to her focus on career as not "normal."

In taking on the mother role or the wife role, you think, 'Okay these are my jobs in the home.' But if you married someone who doesn't mind doing those jobs and does them well, all of a sudden what's happened? ... My husband likes to clean house. It took me a lot of years to get used to that. But I'm used to it now. So it's the traditional role or the role that you think you should have when you grow up. You have this mindset, 'I'm going to be normal. I'm gonna be married. I'm gonna be doing this and be normal ... The cost [of administration] is that I put in more

time to a job than I ever thought I would. But I love it. I really felt I would be the mom that would be home, and always be home during the summer breaks and the winter breaks, and that's just the way life would go on for me and that was normal. And I'm not normal, or what I thought was normal. (Protégé, Maria Valdez)

For this woman leader, her shift from traditional gendered expectations to a focus on career, occurred with a variety of positive outcomes. She enjoys very much the opportunity to affect schools and student learning and to contribute to the big picture of an organization. She likes the potential and the responsibility that leadership provides, and she combines these responsibilities with family. We found many cases of women successfully having a full personal life and a high level career. But women often are succeeding by fitting in and placing no special demands on the organization, and this comes at a cost to women. Mentors who are sensitive to women's lives, and this conflict between personal and professional lives can do much to help reframe organizational and individual expectations and support systems to be more flexible and compatible for women.

Redefining toughness as reflective, ethical, learning-centered leadership

Women leaders say they often feel as though they "don't quite fit" the accepted pattern, and are constantly attempting to either fit into the mold, or change the system. Some women in this sample argued that women can appear more emotional than men, and so they need some mentoring or coaching in how to present a logical and persuasive argument. They believe that women are not more emotional than men, but it's an appearance or perception. In this view, when men are emotional they tend to pout or get angry, whereas women tend to get hurt in a different way. Women can be taught, they argue, to fight with words, and get what they need by reason rather than emotion.

> The union representative was an obvious male chauvinist and he'd say things to me to get an emotional response, so [mentor] taught me, gave me pointers on how to respond to that which was to not respond. (Protégé, Diane Lynch)

> Half our elementary principals are men and half are women and in watching them and working with them I have seen the women appear to be more upset easier than men. So the women need some coaching. I do some coaching quite a bit about how to not let that show, and to be able to fight logically with words without letting the arrows come into your circle [refers to diagram to illustrate leadership that her mentor used to draw]. I was well taught. You have to learn to cope with it without losing your sensitivity or your caring. (Protégé, Meredith Koval)

While perceptions are changing, it seems that the idea that men are more rational, and women more emotional persists. One woman said that her leadership was described by a detractor as "leadership by hysteria." Criticism such as this, even when a false accusation, can erode a woman's self confidence and her ability to lead.

Gender stereotypes about 'women not being as tough as men,' or 'women not being as able to understand fiscal matters or manage money,' have a negative effect. Women may challenge these stereotypes themselves, but nevertheless they feel that these public views may serve to heighten a woman's concerns about taking on a high level leadership role. The woman leader who is reflective and self critical and holding herself to a very high standard, may question whether she can really do all the aspects of the position that are expected of her.

> I think we [women] question ourselves more, have a tendency to be more reflective. Women in positions like this are usually pretty self-critical of themselves and have extremely high expectations. I know ahead of time that I will be

> questioned about is a female tough enough? Does she know enough about money? All those silly gender questions are always gonna be out there for female administrators probably until we are the majority at some point. I need to feel inside that I can do the job and do the job correctly, and this is too important. (Protégé, Diane Lynch)

Leadership in traditional terms has been defined as politics or management of such matters as facilities, finance, personnel, legal issues. Women in this sample feel so strongly about the importance of ethical, reflective leadership that focuses on curriculum and instruction that they sometimes would not take on higher level administrative positions because of the belief that they will be unable to shape the position to meet their needs. Instead, too often, some women argue, the superintendency position is constructed and accepted in the public's perception as requiring an emphasis on politics, budget, building maintenance and grievances. Thus, for example, a female Assistant Superintendent who is being mentored for the superintendency expresses some reluctance to enter the superintendency in particular, preferring other leadership roles. She argues:

> I'm more interested in the instructional side of business, and the superintendents spend most of their time with politics and the budget and maintenance and grievances. Maybe if I were younger I'd go for it. I figure I'm ten years behind men in administration. I was 39 years old when I became an Assistant Principal and my mentor became one when he was 29 years old. (Protégé, Meredith Koval)

Other women leaders complained that they do not like "playing games" or "spending time with politics". They believed their own work as an educator and leader should be enough. The important thing, in their view, is moral integrity, a strong work ethic, the capacity to lead, intellectual strength, and a commitment to children and education. Mentors of women

have a critical role as a sounding board in defusing some of these anxieties and encouraging women to define their leadership in ways that make sense to them.

Problems with same gender and cross-gender mentoring of women

One of the problems with women mentoring women is the relative weakness of the woman mentor's professional position. Compared to their white male colleagues who dominate the power positions, women in administrative positions typically possess less security and networking potential (Also see Aisenberg and Harrington 1988, p. 49, for a similar commentary on university settings). Women who are mentors may themselves be struggling for survival in a context where it is simply more difficult for them than for white males to achieve respect, position, and other support. The world of education is competitive, and women start the game with fewer role models, less visible and actual support for their ideas, and possibly for some, less confidence in their own abilities - having been socialized since birth that power and privilege belongs largely to white males.

Male mentors of women are seen as disadvantaged in other ways, however, because they don't have the female perspective: "They don't see it from a female perspective and that has made it very difficult for me because they may brush it off when it may not be something that's so easily put away" (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales). In situations where some women may be wanting more caregiving mentoring, male mentors may instead encourage them to be tougher or take a tougher stance on an issue, advice that women may not always find helpful: "they handle situations a lot differently sometimes than females do" (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales).

Another one of the problems with men mentoring women into positions, particularly for women of color, is that if the mentor is a white male and he zealously recruits and supports the women candidate into a position, he also needs to be cognizant of the fact that it takes more than one supporter for a woman administrator to be successful. The community in which the woman administrator finds herself also needs to be ready to

acknowledge the contributions and ideas of a woman leader who may be operating from a different paradigm of leadership than in the past. Thus, for example, one superintendent recounted that:

> Les Johnson in Parrish School District brought over an African-American woman from the King School District to be Curriculum Director in Parrish city which is a mainly white community in South East Washington. He was clearly in a sponsorship mode and went out on a limb to get her into that position. But he brought her to an environment that is not personally rewarding for her and it hasn't worked out. (Mentor, Jeff Stewart)

The superintendent himself explains the mentoring implications of such negative experiences, and the need for systemic change.

> You have to spend time on reassuring minorities that the attitude or the beliefs of a few people cannot be allowed to break your spirit or your confidence in yourself and your belief that, first of all in your training and in your own values and your experience. Sometimes people are outright cruel. Sometimes they're just stupid, and you've got to move through that and be reassured that you're doing it right. Don't worry about it. Those people don't get it. Racism is still an issue. From my perspective, my Hispanic background, and from seeing the reaction of the blue collar community to a Black woman curriculum director, it's clear that it's still an issue. (Mentor, Les Johnson)

With all these pressures, women leaders in this sample say that they react by working harder to compensate for these difficulties, and to prove their abilities in the face of public scepticism and lack of support. Women are concerned that they feel they have to

work harder than men to gain the respect and opportunities that men seem to garner so easily: "We still have to prove ourselves beyond what a male colleague has to do. That there are a limited number of opportunities for women, a feeling of being kept in the lower level positions" (Protégé, Eileen Hales). Women of color often feel that their benchmarks for success are even higher than for white women, and white males in particular: "You're always trying to prove yourself" (Protégé, Doreen Ballard); "Being a female I have to work harder" (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales). They feel they constantly have to prove themselves and work harder than anyone else simply to garner a modicum of support and respect. This points out the need for purposeful mentoring to validate women's leadership in public settings, and to help overcome women's perfectionist standards and concerns that their own values and styles might not be validated in leadership.

Finding mentors, male or female, at a level above that of the aspiring administrator is an additional problem, for there are still relatively few women in high level leadership positions. For the state of Washington, men still outnumber women in gaining the most prestigious positions in public education: "This year there were 49 superintendent vacancies. Of the 49 new superintendents, seven were women, only one was an out-of-state candidate and four are serving as interim superintendents. (WASA Hotline, September 1997).

While the majority of the women in the Washington sample have women mentors, they nevertheless argued that it is not always possible to find a woman mentor with experience in the role to which they are aspiring.

> Even now as I look around there are not very many women that are superintendents. Ellen Waters is a great example of somebody. But a male has many more of those models and mentors along the way than females do, and although my main mentor is male, I look to Ellen Waters as somebody that is still a good model for me to look at. If I look around the state there's very few women ...

> But there aren't many female mentors for females, and so those that we have are really important to us. (Protégé, Diane Lynch)

> If you only had females to look at, there aren't enough to look at. So you have to be able to do cross-gender. (Protégé, Susan Rembert)

Older male administrators have a great deal to offer women protégés, such as their access to their power base, lengthy experience and wisdom, but women may prefer a woman mentor and this may be hard to find. Even if the women protégés find women mentors, their mentors may suffer the typical fate of minorities and be pulled in many different directions, with multiple responsibilities as the "minority" participant in leadership. With so few women in the highest positions, how can they reasonably be expected to learn their new positions, and at the same time mentor the many aspiring women at the lower levels?

An issue for women of color is that they have even fewer people to select as their mentors from the ranks of administrators of color. Minority women would like to have mentors of color, but they can't always find them:

> One need for women of color is just having role models and finding other women who are trying to accomplish what they are, and also seeing that their needs are met, their basic needs are met. Finding other peers or other women that they can connect with. And don't lose hope. Too often we've been burned and told that you should not be going for that. (Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez)

Many women of color have found male mentors of color, which they appreciate from the standpoint of having people who understand racism and cultural politics, but they also want women of color mentors, and feel that too few are available. More equal relationships do

seem to be possible, with many women directors and principals able to find other women of color in their ranks that they can relate to and share things with. As an example:

> There's a really good friend that I have that I tremendously respect and she's very professional as well. We communicate a lot and I really admire her because she's an Hispanic female and that helps a lot. But it's not so much a mentor as much as sharing that this is going on, what do you think, type of thing, and helping each other out. But it's not so much as a mentor. (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales)

The equal peer type of relationship that Ramona Gonzales, an Hispanic woman Assistant Director has established with another Hispanic woman professional friend is seen by her as somehow different to mentoring, but from our perspective this form of mentoring/collaboration may be critical to women's success. The distinction for Ramona seems to be one of degree, that mentoring is more intensive, whereas the professional friendship is "not so much". The mentoring relationship seems to rely on the mentor having power, knowledge or wisdom or opportunity beyond that available to the protégé, and these administrators of color at a higher level are so few, she argues, that mentor-protégé relationships of the same gender and race are not always possible.

Some women of color may also feel distanced from their white mentors, and may prefer to keep this relationship strictly professional, not personal. Ramona also argues that women of color personalize everything more, therefore for good mentoring to occur it is critical that the intimacy is there. And because women of color leaders may be more distanced from some of their white colleagues, and do not feel really connected, they may prefer to keep these relationships de-personalized. When women of color do not feel part of the white in-group, and do not share the high level of trust that is given when relationships are personalized, they may keep the mentoring relationships with white colleagues deliberately on a "professional only" basis.

> Minorities sometimes, because they are not part of the in-group, may be feeling a little bit disenfranchised, and not have that personal/professional relationship that they want. It's kept strictly professional because it's kept that way on purpose. (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales)

For many women, the close mentoring which involves access to networking, a system or people, resources and assistance available has not yet been established: "Certainly minorities don't have a networking system that's already in place within the workplace. You just don't. It's a disadvantage because you can't discount that networking is incredibly valuable in administration" (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales). Women in leadership are a minority, and for many women the gap between their life experiences and the public expectations for leadership, combined with the lack of public credibility and public support, makes leadership difficult, and mentoring even more imperative. Clearly, the mentoring issue for women is confounded when race is also taken into account.

"Double jeopardy" for women of color

Women of color feel that they face additional conflicts, what they call "double jeopardy" on account of being both female and a person of color. These concerns will be addressed briefly in the next section. Please note that in the Washington state sample, mentors and protégés were limited to Hispanic and African-American. Thus, in referring to women of color as a general term, the findings may not apply to other groups not represented in this sample. Where relevant we have indicated the ethnicity of the participant.

The "fish bowl" effect: Washington state is a predominantly white state, which is also representative of the public school populations and their administration, although this varies

from school district to school district. But an overall gap exists between the percentage of the minority student population in Washington state K-12 public schools and the percentage of minority teachers in the K-12 system: 14.65% minority students and 5.10% minority teachers (USA Today 1997, p. 7d). There are significant populations of Hispanic/Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans and African-American student in Washington schools, and insufficient teachers and administrators who represent students of color.

Furthermore, women of color argue that the misperception persists that some people of color get their promotions and positions because of their ethnicity, not their competence. They also point out that while many white men are incompetent, no-one questions their authority or capability. The very public confidence that is needed to carry out an administrative job well is undermined by the constant questioning and challenging of every decision made and every action taken by an administrator of color. Women of color argue that minorities are in a "fishbowl" and that this kind of intense scrutiny has a demoralizing and negative effect on performance, morale and efficacy. As an example:

> We had a couple of administrators in our district hired because they were minority and I resent that so much because I want to be hired because I'm good and can do the job, not because I'm minority. It just makes all the other minorities have to work harder to prove ourselves, and a lot of attention is called to these two people because they do screw up. Yet we have three or four white males within our district that are administrators that we accept and we tolerate and it's been like this for years, but they're white males so what's the difference. You have more of a spotlight on you as a minority and as a female. (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales)

When Doreen Ballard, an African-American principal engages in leadership she feels that people are always ready to criticize or take complaints to the superintendent's office. The mentor's role is critical in helping women of color to believe in themselves, and not be

discouraged by the demeaning and demoralizing effects of people thinking they gained their positions because of their color, not their competence. It may also be crucial that each person of color have at least one mentor who is a woman of color, or mentors who strongly identify with and understand the disabling power of racism. For instance Doreen Ballard, an African-American woman principal, appreciates that her mentor, Othene Kirkland, is also an African-American woman who has been a principal for many years and has faced racism herself (e.g., a staff member telling her she got her position because of her color). For Principal Ballard, her move from the Eastern United States to a predominantly white city in Eastern Washington state was a "shock", but her mentor who had lived with the racism that she sees as widespread in Texas, helped her to deal with the trauma.

> The lady who is mentoring me had been a principal like fifteen years and she was from Texas and she had grown up in the era of civil rights. See I was from back East, so I think my background was different. But coming to [city] and being subjected to some of the racism, discrimination, it was really a shock to me. (Protégé, Doreen Ballard)

Her mentor, through shared experiences and an empathy built on trust and friendship, is able to motivate and inspire her to believe in herself, despite the discouragement of others.

Being considered a "novelty" and typecast into stereotypical roles: Women of color leaders say they also face the situation that they are considered a "novelty," and must deal with the hardships and difficulties of being considered different and unusual in a patronizing way. White teachers, staff, administrators and parents don't necessarily bother to learn about the minority administrators' language, cultural and ethnic heritage. Women of color appreciate their male mentors of color because they are at times also victims of this patronizing white

worldview, and that they understand what it feels like to be marginalized by the dominant white culture.

> Part of my mentorship [with my Hispanic male mentors] is helping me through that and helping me respond to that. Once I opened my mouth and they saw that I knew what I was talking about, it was semi-okay, I guess. You still have to prove yourself. But I was a novelty and that was very uncomfortable for me. I think they understood that, being Hispanic males. I think they find themselves in that particular situation as well. (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales)

Women of color argue that they are frequently typecast into the role of ESL/Bilingual or multicultural specialist, and overlooked for their competencies as a specialist in other areas that are more broad-based and mainstream. They feel that just because they are people of color doesn't mean they have an interest and desire to always be the authority on diversity issues.

> I don't want to be just categorized as that. I try to be more mainstream as well, because I don't want to be locked into a box that this is all I can do. For example one of the programs that I manage is bilingual ed. I don't want to be locked into a box that that's all I can do. I can also analyze curriculum. I can also do various things that go along with that. So it's very important that I communicate that just because I'm Hispanic and I speak Spanish doesn't mean I can be locked into bilingual ed. That happens a lot with our teachers and with our administrators. (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales)

If women of color are channelled into the so-called diversity positions, they feel that leaves them on the margins yet again, with only infrequent opportunities to make complete and

systemic changes to the system. A woman of color who is Assistant Superintendent for Instruction or Curriculum, for instance, may have more opportunities to make significant changes to the school system's culture through the curricular and instructional changes that are introduced, whereas the Bilingual/ESL person may only have influence over a minority of the school population.

Racism/ undermining of leadership: At times the challenges and obstacles to success in leadership are blatant, and at other times they are subtle. Women leaders of color recount numerous conflicts that arose from racism. Some examples follow. Doreen Ballard, an African-American elementary principal in a predominantly white city, is experiencing staff and parents going around her to a higher authority, the white female area director, in order she believes, to undermine her efforts. In addition, complaints are taken to the Education Association. As a leader she feels her work is constantly undermined. Instead of coming to her directly to solve conflicts and problems, she sees staff and parents "going downtown," taking the issues to other leaders, actions which challenge her leadership. As a leader she has been trying to develop relationships of trust, but she doesn't feel that others are giving her a chance.

> Somehow they don't trust, have faith, I don't know what the word is. Somehow they question you more. You're always on on the firing line. I've been here four years [as principal] and they're easy to judge, easy to accuse, and not to communicate. Only certain people, like some of the comments they made to [city union]. My area director said, 'These are just petty, these are not major.' But why don't they come to me? If they came to me we could talk about it. I feel they don't come to me because some of these statements are not true ... When I go to them they say I'm targeting them or they've also used the word fear, like they fear me. I said, 'Why do they fear me?' (Protégé, Doreen Ballard)

When this African-American woman principal questions these end-runs around her, people say that they "fear her", which is part of the discourse of racism. Principal Ballard believes she is a good leader, yet when complaints keep going to the union and to her area director, she begins to question her own competence. Other principals have downplayed her problems, and made comments such as, "Everyone has their year, so it's your year this year" [to be on the firing line]. But she is tired of the constant challenges to her leadership and has promised herself that if it continues it will be abuse, and she is not going to let these difficulties affect her health or family: "If it was unbearable, like it would affect my health or my family, I would get out of it. I thought I would not stay in here to take the abuse. You know my ancestors were strong, but I don't know about that" (Protégé, Doreen Ballard).

Throughout all the challenges to her work, her husband and two children are her foundation and support. While it is difficult to balance family, children and work, this has not been a problem for her. It is the unexpected additional obstacles, arising from racism, that have caused her to set some limits on what she is prepared to endure for her job. She confides, "Sometimes I stay awake at night and think, why is this happening to me, knowing that I'm a strong leader, and that everything I'm doing is for kids' achievement and for teachers doing their jobs, and people are just challenging me" (Protégé, Doreen Ballard). She has tried questioning her white female area director and seeking her support, and while she has this support in words and verbal commitment, she does not feel this carries over to substantive support.

> My mentor [a retired high school principal, African-American] had lots of problems because there was no support. I have a little more support, more than she, because I just went to my area director and said, 'Hey, I'm an African-American female. I have different needs. I need more support. I need you visible. I need the staff to

know and I need the parents to know that you support me. So she said, 'Well how does this look?' And I just told her, I said, 'Listen, you are born and raised in [city]. Open your eyes. This is what's happening. (Protégé, Doreen Ballard)

While Principal Ballard has been able, through her own persistence, to gain some of the support she needs from her white woman Area Director and the district, this burden might not have been put on her shoulders. Why did she have to go to her Area Director and ask/plead for support? With experiences such as these, some women leaders of color may not be retained in their positions, or potential leaders may not aspire to leadership positions, with a subsequent loss of talented people from leadership. We also see how critical the mentor can be in understanding, sustaining belief in oneself, providing emotional and practical support, and negotiating conflicts and tensions.

Activist plan - "helping our people": Women of color also talked about their commitment to "helping our people." Particularly in central Washington state, where many Hispanics are employed in agricultural farm laboring positions, it is disheartening for Hispanic women who are progressing in their careers to look around themselves and see their people in poverty, with few prospects for professional improvement. Ramona Gonzales came to Washington state from New Mexico and was shocked to find so few Hispanic middle class in Central Washington, and it renewed her passion and commitment to social activism.

It was literally cultural shock for me coming here because I had never seen Hispanics so downtrodden. And it has made me a better person because I have become more passionate about helping our people, whereas in the past I thought about it, but now it's become a vocation to help our people. And they've [Hispanic male mentors] instilled that in me, both of them, because they have been here before and gone through that. (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales)

Women of color also displayed an awareness of the politics of race and consciousness about whiteness as an invisible hegemony. They spoke about the need to understand and teach about "white man's rule." For women of color knowledge of this political situation is necessary to strategize and move up in a social world that accords more success and privileges to whites, particularly white men (also see McIntosh 1989; Jensen 1998).

> Particularly if they are a person of color they have to be aware of what I call the white man's rule ... These cultures have been in place for a very long time. But I still face those barriers today. Learning to know the rules. I'm to the point in my life now where I know the rules and so I can kind of play with them now and poke fun at them and I'm actually more verbal about it. What is a white man's rule? What is a white man's world? It's a mirror image of who or what they are, meaning, tall, thirtyish, now these are stereotypes, white, Caucasian, education, Ivy League, good salary, knowing sport statistics, knowing how to play golf, driving a nice car. But these are just a part of it. Part of it is how men connect and in these fashions. Sports is a real big metaphor, if you want to say to how they do their connectiveness, how they do their business and how they're promoted. It's been established for hundreds of years now. Well you can learn to play golf, you can learn to speak their language, sports, whatever's happening with business efforts or something like that. Then maybe they can learn to speak your language. In most cases the school board is based on a white hierarchical type of system. Then it is important to know the rules of this white hierarchical system and it will definitely have an effect. You don't want to be revolutionary, definitely not. Nothing turns people off quicker than anything when you become very serious,

> what they depict as violent behavior. As women of color I've always felt we needed to go beyond the policies, work from behind. (Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez)

For Gabriela Ramirez, an Hispanic woman mentoring an Hispanic woman, she sees part of her role as a mentor to teach her protégé about the historical and contemporary situation, as well as strategies to cope with white privilege. She believes that you can't simply change the system, you have to work from within in order to be effective.

> You have to understand the system and the people who are propagating this mentality, this whole culture. Secondly, I don't want to call it Uncle Tom, but you have to play along with it, just go with the flow, be flexible, be collaborative. Now this is also stemming from women, go with the flow, being flexible, being more collaborative. (Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez)

At the same time, Gabriela believes that women must be prepared to stand up for what is right and name oppression when they see it, and demand change from within. If necessary, women must go above the ordinary chain of command in order to seek justice.

> I can remember one instance where another white male had done something which was wrong and it put me in an awkward position. So I brought the issue to my white male boss and he said, 'Well forget it because that is just the way the guy is.' Well I said, 'No you don't understand. I'm here telling you calmly that I don't like it and if he does it again I'm going to go over your head.' He could get away with these things, but I had to stand up in a corrupt system. (Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez)

Women of color in this sample displayed a strong sense of justice and social responsibility, and a belief that if they could only be supported in ways that they need, that they can help change the system from within.

Mentoring women

Many women in this sample, white and of color, nevertheless say that they are still hesitant about taking on higher level leadership roles, and this is where mentors can provide critical guidance. Women may hold themselves to a very high standard, and want to prepare themselves fully before taking on leadership roles. Their male counterparts they see as less prepared; that men simply jump into higher level positions even if they do not seem to be fully prepared - men are willing to learn on the job, and feel publicly supported in doing so.

> Gail Shelton, one of the first women superintendents in the state of Washington described it best when she said, 'When a female goes after a position such as the superintendency, they want to make sure they essentially have all their ducks in a row, that they have all the skills that they need to experience before they step into that role. A male, on the other hand, will say 'Oh yeah, I can do that,' and jump into it and do it without all that preparation ahead of time. (Protégé, Diane Lynch)

Women at times may experience conflict between their own high standards and expectations of themselves as a leader and their own critical assessment of their performance. The women in this study sample say they need additional and specific mentoring beyond what they are currently getting. These women say they often feel inadequate and unprepared as leaders, despite extensive background in teaching, and academic preparation. Thus, one of the critical mentoring needs of women is for extensive encouragement and confidence boosting. Men already have a very strong institutional and

culture support base for whatever they're doing. Their work is validated already, so there's less need for them to be looking for any kind of validation from superiors because it's naturally there. As one woman director explains:

> I don't think you feel so successful as maybe a male colleague would. It's almost not as accepted for a female to screw up than it would be for a male. This is true for minority/non-minority persons and it also transfers over to females as well. (Protégé, Ramona Gonzales)

The belief is that women are more highly criticized than males, and that leaders of color are also under more scrutiny with less support than whites.

Women leaders in this sample say they sometimes feel as if people are watching them with a "wait-and-see if they can prove themselves" attitude. This situation puts women in a position of defensiveness and not feeling that they can trust people. As Principal Diane Lynch explains she wanted to be successful, and had the feeling that the other principals were in a competitive relationship with her. Therefore the mentor's role was critical in providing an avenue for testing ideas and getting feedback that she felt she was unable to get with the other principals.

> It was really hard for me to go to the other principals in the district because I felt that I was playing catch up and that I was being watched to see, well can she really do anything with that building or is it going to stay the same? And so I needed him [mentor] to give me that feedback because my very competitive nature did not allow me to call the other principals probably as freely as I should have felt I could. But I used him, then, for that feedback piece rather than my colleagues. (Protégé, Diane Lynch)

Part of public support is the network of people to assist you in your work. As women move up to a higher level they can become isolated with fewer and fewer people to talk with and bounce ideas off. This is where mentors' encouragement and support is important in assisting women as they take on leadership challenges. The mentors are someone the protégés can talk to frankly, without having to feel that they have to put up a front that they always know what is going on, or what to do. Key people with access to information and resources, and the wisdom of experience, are essential if a new woman leader is to feel that she is not "making it alone," which is impossible to do anyway as a leader:

> I'm sure w. n I have my first superintendency or assistant superintendency I'll call [mentor] and either go visit him or give him calls, that kind of stuff, or if I want to bounce it off somebody. Because as I move up this chain of command, in a way, from school and being a classroom teacher to a principal to central office or superintendency, in a way you have fewer and fewer people to talk to. So those mentors that you have along the way become really important people. (Protégé, Marcia Francis)

> And there was always this next step. She [mentor] was saying, 'You can do this.' I don't think there was anyone in our family [in leadership positions.] I look back at anyone I'm related to, people don't have management positions. We're the basic blue collar worker, and so I never thought beyond that. So having someone push me was really good. I think that a lot of my success was that she had a vision that I could be there and I achieved it. A lot of it is her credit. (Protégé, Maria Valdez)

Women in this study also argued that women need to learn to take the initiative and shape and create their own mentorship, rather than waiting for a mentor to "rescue" them, because it won't happen.

> A person creates their own mentorship too. A person has to decide what are your strengths and what are the areas that you need to work on and design their own program. If you have excellent competencies in certain areas you don't want to spend your time on that. You want to just spend your time on areas that you want to develop. The mentor needs to get direction from the protégé in this regard. My mentor is so supportive, and any time I need anything I just need to say, 'I need to have you do this and this.' (Mentor, Marcia Francis)

> I think my responsibility [as a protege] is also to voice where I would like to go. Is it feasible? This is something I want to do. I'm learning to ask questions because I didn't do that early on. (Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez)

Furthermore, mentors have to be aware of and support their protégés to deal with and challenge racist practices and situations. When some women of color are faced with conflicts and challenges to their leadership that are rooted in racism, they describe how they have reacted as involving three stages: (a) disbelief; (b) personal distress, questioning yourself; and (c) cultivating an attitude of bravery, to do the job to the best of their ability (Protégé, Doreen Ballard; Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez). Initially, they are surprised that this is happening to them, because even thought they have been facing racism all their lives, they enter educational leadership with a focus on children and a commitment to improving teaching and learning, a certain idealism and energy associated with their new roles. As Doreen Ballard, an African-American principal explains: "At first it was disbelief because I

couldn't believe that things were still happening that you used to read about" (Protégé, Doreen Ballard).

Women of color leaders argue that in order to survive in the system they need a number of support mechanisms, and to develop certain qualities within themselves. Firstly, they need the support of a mentor who understands their struggles (preferably also a woman of color of the same ethnicity): "She [mentor] was from Texas so the things that went on in [city], some of the racist things she just dealt with it, and she was able to come in and survive. She's a survivor" (Protégé, Doreen Ballard). Secondly, they talked about having and needing a spiritual, and/or emotional support system, that can come from the church, one's husband or partner and children, and close friendships. It is not usually found within the school or school district, with the exception of mentors, who may or may not be in the school district.

Women of color also talked about the obligation they have to mentor other people of color, and how important mentoring is in opening up the possibilities and opportunities, particularly for those with lowered aspirations. They understand how limited one's opportunities can seem when one doesn't have the class background to see possibilities for oneself as a leader, e.g., if no-one in your family has ever held a professional or leadership position. Some women argued for the need for mentor and protégé to be matched in ethnicity or gender so that they can share gender or cultural experiences. Shared understandings means that the mentor is better able to prepare the protégé to deal with difficulties and challenges that arise.

> It stems back from a culture and experiences, or gender experiences which are two different situations. I think it's very important that those are matched (Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez)

> Mentoring is very important, I think for anyone, but especially for those people who haven't set leadership as a goal. I undertand this better now than I would have done before, because sometime in the past I would just leave people where they're happy and let them be. But if you know someone can benefit, it's a benefit to the district, and it's a benefit to the personal self too, so they can see how far they can move to. I'm looking at that more than I ever have before. (Protégé, Maria Valdez)

Finally, women of color advocate having multiple mentors. Mentors might be men of color who can identify with the race issues, women of color, or white women who have the "gender piece," and possibly also some empathetic white men who may be gatekeepers in allowing access and entry to positions, and have the advantage of experience and public credibility.

> I think it takes all those qualities to be a good mentor and I advocate having a lot of mentors because each person brings a certain amount of skill and experience. This time around I'm making sure that I connect with different people, because somebody will say something that I really need to hear and I can act on it better. Different mentors can offer different things. (Mentor, Gabriela Ramirez)

Conclusions

The literature tends to support the notion that women, white and minority, who aspire to educational administration positions are somewhat more likely to advance beyond their highest goals (Edson 1995, p. 43). But many women do not aspire to administration, or the level of administration they are capable of, because of the conflicts involved and the perceived costs to themselves and their personal goals in life, and the additional difficulties they face.

This paper shows these participants as unique women struggling with conflicts between the public role of leadership and the desire to preserve their personal priorities and values. Mentors can play a critical role in showing how women can successfully combine professional and personal lives. Mentors can also model flexibility in combining these roles. Women ought not feel that they have to compartmentalize their lives, rather that they can experiment with integrating personal/family and professional life, so that each setting can flow into the other. As we move to the new century it makes no sense to see women in leadership roles in public schools struggling to mimimize disruption to the system.

This paper also shows that women have perceptions of themselves as "other", different and at odds with traditional administrators and administrative norms, and they are trying to make a difference. For instance, the women in this study saw themselves as reflective, caring people who valued people and relationships over politics. They argued that this focus on learning-centred leadership and a personal ethic of care meant they were different from the vast majority of administrators who may strive to engage in politics and use a power base and a so-called objective style of leadership. For their own particular leadership style to emerge they felt they had to constantly shore up their efforts, with mentors' encouragement.

The feeling was also expressed that women suffer from a lack of public support and public credibility that is at the foundation of leadership. The women describe situations in which they are scutinized, challenged and undermined. At the same time, we see strong, pioneering women who are accepting the challenges and persevering in an adverse environment because of their belief in their contributions and abilities, and with the necessary support of their mentors.

Finally, racist practices and attitudes are revealed that women of color face in working within a conservative predominantly male, predominantly white culture of educational administration, what one woman calls "white man rule." We see a strong desire for social and educational change/ critical consciousness, particularly amongst

women of color. The women's gendered, class, race and cultural experiences came through in these interviews. The larger study (Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan, in press) further develops some of these issues, and draw out in more detail the complexities of race and gender for women in leadership. The larger study also explains how mentors can provide caring relationships and assist their protégés in offering practical guidance, intellectual support, and also emotional and cultural support as they deal with these issues. Mentors can greatly shape women's growth and potential in school leadership. Mentors can help boost their protégés confidence and develop a sense of connection and identity as a leader. Examples of the work of other women of color can be particularly salient. Thus, for an African-American leader, if her mentor is an African-American woman who is clearly making a difference in education and doing well, this can help build a necessary sense of possibility,and connectedness. People need to see themselves reflected in the leadership surrounding them, and for that leadership to be making a difference in tangible ways in the educational process. As we have seen, it is not enough for women to be trying to "prove themselves" and "working harder" than anyone else. As their mentors can show - women also have to learn the rules and then bend them to their advantage, to be smart and politically savvy, able to change the face of educational leadership.

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